



**TOWN OF NORTH HAMPTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE
NORTH HAMPTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

FEBRUARY 9, 2021 5:00 PM

NORTH HAMPTON TOWN HALL

ZOOM MEETING

Approved April 7, 2021

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Richard Luff

VIA ZOOM: Vice-Chair/Planning Board Rep Phil Wilson, Heritage Commission Rep Nancy Monaghan, Glenn Martin, Business Associate Rep Renee Locke, Jeff Hillier, David Ciccalone, Select Board Rep Larry Miller, Jonathan Pinette, Leszek Stachow, Gary Stevens (arrived late)

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Michael Tully

AGENDA

Chairman Richard Luff welcomed everyone to the North Hampton Economic Development Committee Meeting of February 9, 2021 and called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

IRONWOOD VILLAGE DISTRICT MASTER PLAN:

Chairman Luff said the Economic Development Committee needs to find a balance between residents' desires, property owners and developers, with practical options that are economically viable and allow them to create spaces residents will be proud of and ultimately patronize and need to come together on their recommendations to the Select Board.

Determine Recommendations to Select Board

Chairman Luff said the Committee seems to agree on the beautification along Route 1 as a huge benefit to the Town. Vice-Chair Phil Wilson said he put together some wording for the recommendation: "The Select Board should, as soon as practicable, initiate discussions with NH DOT and Rockingham Municipal Planning Organization (MPO) to revise plans for future modifications to Route 1 in North Hampton to create improvements and changes consistent with the designation of a section of Route 1, as within a "Village Center". The Select Board should discuss adopting an MOU between the Town and the DOT about

access/management within the Village Center. The Ironwood Report should be used as a source of ideas for these discussions, including for example adding sidewalks, bike paths, street lighting, vegetative medians and landscaping.”

Chairman Luff said the next piece is the discussion issue around a level of mixed use that may not reflect what Ironwood proposed, as the graphics they presented are not what they are looking for in North Hampton. He said he felt residents would like the development to be a balance between commercial and residential and EDC needs to find a way to phrase that to the Select Board.

Mr. Ciccalone said mixed use has to be done in a manner that works with septic infrastructure which rules out a lot of the large buildings shown in the conceptual drawing. Mr. Hillier said his understanding was that the IBR as currently envisioned in predominantly business, and he did not hear that anyone had any concepts of increasing residential area along Lafayette.

Ms. Monaghan said there are 47 residential lots on Route 1 in the IBR and about 200 commercial lots, and said the reason mixed use was not allowed in the IBR was in order to retain all commercial developments on Route 1 and not intrude into residential area; you cannot put mixed use on one lot and not on another. Chairman Luff said mixed use seems to be desirable and gives developers and property owners options to spread out their investments and have a few different sources of income. Mr. Stachow said mixed use in his view would be shops, stores and cafes on the ground floor with people living above, which would enable the building to present an economic case, be a catalyst for similar activities, and maintain the village feel.

Mr. Wilson said he does not think residents equate economic development with residential development and really do not want it and said EDC would be very short-sighted if they assume mixed use simply meant 2 or 3 floors of apartments on top of retail space; he said mixed use does not refer to a building but to a lot and zoning is about property. He said mixed use is not a simple question, and it will increase taxes and increase the population, neither of which residents want. Mr. Stachow said if that is the case then there is no point in pursuing a Village District.

Mr. Wilson said there are examples of village-like centers with no residential development; it could be accomplished by turning a shopping center and put the long side 15-20 ft from the street, extend the ell back with parking behind and have sidewalks in front and retain the architectural characteristics of New England, getting the feel of a Village Center. Mr. Hiller said the idea of mixed use came to this Committee as part of a much bigger package, and they need to reassess and review mixed use in the context of their current problem with empty storefronts.

Mr. Wilson said they would need to define a totally different district (i.e. TIF) with provisions for within that district that apply to everyone in the district. With an overlay district or a separate zoning district they would need to be careful about how they lay out the boundaries. Ms. Monaghan said the Planning Board has looked at creating an industrial district on Route 1, but property owners outside such a district will say they are being limited in their ability to attract a business of that type to their property.

Mr. Stachow asked Mr. Hillier if he was saying his concern was for the empty buildings and the economic climate we are currently in, and in those instances, he would consider a mixed-use solution to create a better economic case for the business; Mr. Hillier agreed and Mr. Stachow said that is really all he has been looking for. Mr. Hillier said he does not want to open the Town up to very ambitious and well-funded developers to come in and drop a bomb. Chairman Luff said this is a recommendation to the Select Board and they need to focus on the bigger picture; he asked Mr. Wilson if he was opposed to mixed use in a restrained fashion.

Mr. Wilson said he is in favor of mixed use as long as it is compatible with the Town's requirements to provide affordable housing. He said the Zoning Ordinance is in place for what residents see as their vision of the Town; a developer can come in and say he cannot afford to rely on affordable housing revenues. Chairman Luff said he feels the affordable housing piece of this is out of the bailiwick of this Committee.

Mr. Martin said the beautification of Route 1 is something they need to do for economic development and felt mixed use on a smaller scale, up and down Route 1 and the IBR, not just in the Village District, will do great things for North Hampton. Ms. Monaghan said once you give mixed use you get dense development and a much larger population and asked if they were talking about economic development for the Town or for developers to have returns on their investments. She said she is not opposed to mixed use but opposed to saying it is a cure-all when it is so complicated to deal with.

Chairman Luff said everyone seems to be in agreement that some level of restrained mixed use is a positive, and they should start there to craft a recommendation to the Select Board that encompasses all the concerns of the Committee. Mr. Stachow asked if the Committee supports mixed use on an incremental basis with a focus on businesses who would be the first to benefit for commercial reasons.

Mr. Wilson said having been involved in planning and zoning regulations he does not think it is possible practically to implement through Zoning Regulations and said the best thing the Select Board can do is refer planning and zoning recommendations to the Planning Board for consideration and action. Mr. Stachow said we are in a very difficult time where we are all going to be challenged and we ought to be thinking about facing the new challenges and try to find a way to be more creative about our community and giving people a chance to survive.

Mr. Hillier suggested appointing 2 or 3 people who could meet next week and come up with a paragraph on recommendations or bring more information to members on the realities of the issues. Chairman Luff said they already went through all the zoning recommendations and the Sub-Committee compiled a revised list that the Board approved; he suggested just submitting the Sub-Committee recommendations to the Select Board. Mr. Hillier said they originally came from Ironwood and would need to be presented differently to the Select Board. Ms. Monaghan said it is very difficult to make recommendations about changing the zoning when we do not know what we are changing it for.

Mr. Wilson said all of the changes regarding mixed use relate to the Zoning Ordinance and site plan and subdivision regulations, and recommended adding to his paragraph about beautification a second recommendation to: "Refer the Ironwood report to the Planning Board for consideration and recommendations about the Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Regulations, and Subdivision Regulations that are consistent with residents' preferences and our goal of economic development"; include all the

materials EDC has put together, including Liz Durfee's zoning recommendations along with Sub-Committee responses and EDC's reaction to those, and see what happens from there. The Select Board commissioned the Ironwood Report, and this will take a change to the Master Plan, which involves all the RSA-driven provisions, and refer this to the Select Board where action has to be taken.

Mr. Pinette agreed with forwarding the actual Ironwood Plan off to the Select Board with the recommendation of beautification and go from there. Chairman Luff asked if the Committee would be willing to support the Next Steps listed in the Ironwood Report without specifying mixed use. Mr. Stachow said how would they promote opportunities in the District if they do not yet have a plan. Ms. Monaghan said they should make their own next step recommendations. Mr. Wilson said the general goal of the whole effort is to promote opportunities for the Village District development and Ironwood's Master Plan graphics do not serve our purposes and the Zoning review was faulty, and to endorse what Ironwood recommended is not consistent with the findings of the Committee.

Chairman Luff said he finds it tremendously disappointing that the Committee has taken years to come to the conclusion that all we want to do is beautify Route 1, and felt it was a waste of taxpayer dollars if the Committee cannot come together to make some level of recommendation based on all their work and effort through all forums. Mr. Hillier said they should restate and modify recommendations in a short paragraph and take that as only 1 part of Ironwood; he said he would still like to get back to addressing empty storefronts.

Chairman Luff said the other part was to create a picture which has been completely lost, and the Committee does not have a picture from Ironwood that is worth using as vision of the EDC. He said he asked Ironwood to revise it but was not sure it would ever happen as the budget has been spent. Mr. Pinette said taxpayers paid to have a plan developed and they have a right to see what resulted, and it should be forwarded to the Select Board with the Zoning responses of the EDC Sub-Committee; it will come down to Zoning/Planning Board changes anyway and go to voters to decide.

Mr. Wilson said the Committee has to forward the whole report and said we are talking about a cover letter. Ms. Locke said once beautification gets rolling there are still people out there who will take an existing building; next step would be finding creative ways to fill empty storefronts and work with what we have now. Ms. Monaghan agreed with sending the Ironwood Report to the Select Board with the beautification recommendation and say the EDC does not support this.

Mr. Wilson said the Committee needs to do the right thing for the Town; 1/3 of the Ironwood recommendation was good and 2/3 was what Ironwood wanted and not what they were asked to do, and the EDC does not support that. Chairman Luff said they can say they are not recommending Ironwood but include next steps the EDC feels it needs to take; they need some validation of what the Committee is working for and their vision.

Mr. Hillier said the cover letter should say that Ironwood put a lot of effort into this plan, highlight some of the positives, and say there were many elements in this plan which while seriously out of reach now do have some potential for more immediate problems like empty storefronts, and mixed use does have promise to help there.

Town Administrator Tully said he does not think the Select Board is looking for a rubber stamp on a plan but for EDC to go through the Ironwood Plan and come up with the positives and negatives of it. He said EDC can recommend or not recommend portions of the plan. He suggested starting off with a list of elements then a written paragraph on those specific elements, with EDC assessment of what they support, what they do not support, or where they are split and give the reasons why, and say the Committee could not come to a consensus on mixed use and ask the Select Board to make a decision on that and forward to Planning and Zoning.

Ms. Locke suggested the Committee also forward the Sub-Committee recommendations on Zoning to the Select Board. Mr. Wilson said if they did that he would suggest getting away from the term "beautification" in the final document. They can say "EDC reviewed the Zoning recommendations from Ironwood and the Sub-Committee reviewed those in great detail; we found some acceptable and some not acceptable and the Sub-Committee report is attached; Ironwood was supposed to present graphics of a Village Center and EDC feels they failed and did not present a coherent view of what a Village Center in a town like North Hampton could look like."

Mr. Wilson said they should give the recommendation, give the zoning analysis done by Liz Durfee which is not included in Ironwood's presentation and the Sub-Committee's analysis of those, and state Ironwood failed to deliver a coherent image of what a Village Center in North Hampton might look like. Chairman Luff thanked Mr. Wilson for applying some structure and asked that the Committee move forward with that. He asked that a letter be crafted and circulated to the group.

Mr. Wilson said writing the letter should be simple and include: (1) Recommendation of what to do with the Route 1 corridor; (2) a consultant with Ironwood reviewed our Zoning Ordinance and made a list of recommendations, and the Sub-Committee reviewed those and their recommendation is attached; (3) Ironwood was asked to provide an image of what a Village Center would look like and EDC has found they did not present a coherent response to the request.

Town Administrator Tully suggested the Committee have one member draft that and send it to him and Committee members and said he would schedule an EDC meeting for February 24, 2021 for EDC to revise and make any changes. Ms. Monaghan volunteered to draft the paragraph.

ANY OTHER ITEM THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMITTEE – PERIOD OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Next Meeting: The next Economic Development Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 5:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pinette made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Hillier. All were in favor and Chairman Luff adjourned the meeting at 6:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary